

False Teacher John MacArthur

The Doctrine of the Evil Nature in the Children of God

As our readers know, MacArthur has a great significance in the German-speaking world through its connection with the Study Bible NKJ (Schlachter-Bibel 2000). All the more important are his comments and teachings. Do they correspond to the text of Scripture, or do they teach something else?

a) According to MacArthur, sin supposedly "still retains a foothold in our temporal flesh" (Commentary on Romans 6:6), stating that the "new nature" is "incarcerated (inclosed) in the unredeemed flesh" (6:6); there is a "remnant of the old man, which everyone keeps until he receives his glorious body" (7:5). Meaning "the flesh (is) in the children of God" (7:14 ff; 7:17). Sin "must be able (!) to exercise control" (over the children of God; opposite to Rom 6:14!). Thus there is a conflict or struggle between the sinful flesh and the Spirit of God, which they victoriously overcome with the "power of the Spirit" over the "unredeemed flesh", "killing the deeds of the flesh through the Spirit" and thus finally being able to fulfil the law of God (8,2 ff; 8,13; cf. also Col 3,10). (At this point MacArthur obviously mixes two concepts of flesh: the flesh as the center of sin in the heart and the flesh as the body of man). In short:

"Although the Holy Spirit dwells in all believers, believers still have to struggle with fallen flesh" (1 Cor 3:1)

This absurd doctrine is based on Romans 7, which clearly refers to law-abiding believers who have indeed still received the sinful flesh in themselves and **not** the Holy Spirit, because they are "under the law" and not "under grace".

Given the dual nature of the children of God, children of God would thus have to undergo a permanent "choice" whom they want to serve: Good or Evil, the Spirit of God or sinful flesh (Rom 6:13). MacArthur also emphasizes the need for active struggle and action (Rom 8:13); we must "strive to slay the remaining sin in our flesh" (Col 3:5). And he criticizes the teachings of passive letting things happen (see our contribution: "Struggle or WuWei" on www.faith-center-hannover.de). This is shown by the example of the Corinthians, in which (allegedly) the Holy Spirit dwelt, but which were dominated by "fallen flesh" (1 Cor 3:1). Allegedly the "mortal body", the material body, was "a gateway to sin" (Rom 6:6; 6:12). Supposedly, in the fight against sin and the flesh, we must "take **sin for dead**", make ourselves dead, so to speak (Rom 6:11), and "strike the remaining sin in the flesh" (Col 3:5!) until it is raised from the dead (by whom, actually?) and continues its evil. (By the way: The center of sin is the heart and not the body!) In other words: **we must free ourselves** from the power of sin with our spiritual attitude!

This is completely absurd and wrong. In Kenya, third graders would read more carefully and accurately. A review of the commentaries confirms our fear that the well-known Bible teacher MacArthur also spreads the teachings of the dual nature and existence of evil in the children of God and the doctrine of the eternal struggle between flesh and spirit, just like Rudolf Ebertshäuser, Roger Liebi and many other German teachers. The main reason why children of God continue to sin is the "**unredeemed flesh**" (Col 3:10). Sin is said to be "present in the unredeemed flesh of believers" (Eph 4:24). This is all wrong. The flesh, the human body(!), is indeed not

redeemed, even children of God must die, but this fact has nothing, absolutely nothing to do with the existence of the **evil nature** in children of God, as MacArthur and most believers claim.

b) But the Word of God teaches, that newborns and children of God have decided for God **at their conversion**, they do not have to decide every minute whom they want to serve, unless the conversion is not sincere and has been carried out on the basis of this false doctrine MacArthur is teaching. **Newborns and children of God have no evil nature.** Jesus Christ has redeemed them, even from the evil nature of the devil, through a sincere conversion and baptism in Christ (Rom 6:4). Children of God have "died to sin" (Rom 6:2); the old, sinful man is crucified with Christ, died and was buried (Rom 6:4), so that the "body of sin", the sinful being, is completely destroyed (Rom 6:6); the "new man" is born of God, begotten with His seed, in the image of God in holiness and righteousness, with a new, divine nature that cannot and will not sin (1. John 3:9; 5:18). Children of God have become "free from sin" (Rome 6, three times!), sin will not reign (6:14), Jesus has already killed and destroyed sin, sinful flesh, on the cross. We do not have to kill sin ("continually and repeatedly"), as MacArthur wrongly asserts (Rom 8:13). Funny enough MacArthur is quoting all this verses.

How does that work? Sin is dead, once and for all! Newborn children and children of God have cast off the old, evil nature like old clothes and put on the new man (Eph 4:22 ff; Col 3:9 ff). But not really, according to MacArthur, because they still live in "**unredeemed flesh**" (Col 3:10). The "new man", however, according to Scripture, was **created in the image of God** in holiness and righteousness. Children of God are "servants of righteousness" (Rom 6:18), and not of sin. God is love, truth and truthfulness, and so are the children of God. Warm hearts and love are the main characteristics of true children of God: He who hates his brother, is still in darkness (1 John 2:9, 11). Furthermore the Spirit of God is not merely a "force", a tool or weapon in the fight against sin and flesh, as MacArthur thinks (Rom 8:2 ff). According to this, believers would not be servants of God, but the "Spirit of God" would be "our instrument" to fight sin. What a strange image of God!

The truth is: Whoever has been converted, calls himself a Christian and continues to sin is **not born again**. New-born believers and children of God have in fact "dead of sin", they do not have to assume, to imagine or talk themselves into it ("taking it for granted"), as all those who claim to be faithful to the Bible like MacArthur. Sin is dead, it has to be killed by Christ on the cross. The Corinthians are no counter-evidence, they are still "carnal", as Paul emphasizes three times (1 Cor 3); they still lived "in the flesh", which is proved by their behaviour. They were not born again and not "in the Spirit" because they had not received the Spirit of God. Children of God have crucified the flesh through "baptism in Christ" (Röm 6,4; Gal 5:24). Even Gal 5:17 does not help: This verse deals about the general contrast between flesh and spirit, **not** of an intrapersonal conflict, and does not prove that the sinful flesh also dwells in the children of God. The claim that the sinful flesh survived the crucifixion, the new birth and the baptism in Christ and now dwells in the body, in the material body, is completely stupid. The evil (or the good) dwells in the heart (Mt 15:19), and not in the bones! The body is only the executive, the body is neutral in spiritual-moral terms, it has no will of its own, neither or nor against sin, it is just "dead matter". Every child knows that. Incidentally, even MacArthur does not provide a single proof for this absurd thesis.

Conclusion: MacArthur's teaching does not correspond to Scripture, it is contradictory and confused. MacArthur is a false teacher with a devastating influence on Christianity worldwide. In his commentaries he distorts and falsifies the Scriptures. In contrast to Scripture, he spreads the false doctrine of the **dual nature** (good and evil) and the existence of the evil nature in the children of God. As explained, MacArthur denies the complete work of

redemption of Christ, especially the deliverance from the evil nature of sin that the fall of man has brought to us. With this doctrine he makes God a liar and Christ's work of redemption a torso. Christ not only freed us from the guilt of sin, but also "from sin" (Rom 6:10), from "old Adam", and destroyed the old sin nature in us. The flesh is dead! New-born believers and children of God are not carnal, not "in the flesh": "When we **were** in the flesh, sin was at work in us ..." (Rom 7:5). The doctrine of the "carnal Christian" is another heresy of most Christians, even the serious ones. The same nonsense is spread by the revised version of the German "Study Bible". There too the anonymous author claims in the subject index under the keyword "flesh" that newborn believers and children of God can still "think and act in the flesh ... and give space to the flesh". Worse still, they have to give the flesh itself "into death".

But Scripture teaches: God has taken away our evil heart through Jesus Christ and given us a new, loving heart.

HE has given us a new, good and just "government". The battle against sin is over. The devil and his works are defeated. Jesus has defeated "sin" for us, once and for all! While now some believers have been arguing about the right doctrine for 2,000 years, it seems that most believers don't care what they believe, at least they don't search and struggle for the truth, after all, all roads lead to Rome or heaven, they say. This is another heresy of believers.

But Scripture teaches us: Only "**the truth will make us free**"; only if believers hold fast to the "word of truth", to the right teaching of Christ as explained and spread by Paul, we are truly disciples of Christ (John 8:31.32). False teachers have an easy job, because they have totally incapacitated the believers, they can rely on the fact that no one reads, studies, examines or even admonishes. For them admonishers are in a way "enemies of the state"! They have "no time" for this "trivial matter"; they rush from appointment to appointment, they are concerned with fame and business, not with the truth, not with the true gospel. The way they are leading us will never open the door to heaven. This is also shown by the false doctrine of sanctification of MacArthur. Obviously, there is no unadulterated (healthy, salutary) teaching, as Paul is teaching in his letters. ABC

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